Final
Environmental Assessment
Ponca State Park
Resource and Education Center

Ponca, NE

December 2000

US Army Corps
of Engineers
Omaha District

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PONCA STATE PARK RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER
PONCA STATE PARK, NEBRASKA
MISSOURI NATIONAL RECREATIONAL RIVER
JANUARY 2001

An environmental assessment has been prepared that summarizes the expected effects of the proposed project on the existing environment. The Omaha District, Corps of Engineers in partnership with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, proposes to construct a research and education center (REC) at Ponca State Park in Dixon County, Nebraska. The proposed project would consist of the construction of a 15,000 square foot REC building, a constructed treatment wetland to handle the waste from the REC building, a 1.5 acre lake that would receive used water from the heat pump system, a system of geothermal wells for use as part of a heat pump system, a new entrance road, and a parking lot. Ponca State Park is located within the boundaries of the Missouri National Recreational River. Construction of the REC was authorized by Section 707 of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (TL 95-625). This act amended the National Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968 (90-542).

Three alternatives were considered but eliminated from further consideration. These include two alternative construction sites for the REC and the no-action alternative. The two alternative locations were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria set up to evaluate the sites as well as the preferred alternative. The no-action alternative was eliminated because this alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the proposed project, and the facilities at Ponca State Park would remain inadequate to meet the needs of current or future visitors to the park.

All environmental, social, and economic factors, which are relative to the proposal, were considered in this assessment. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, threatened and endangered species, vegetation, wetlands, cultural resources, air quality, water quality, and wildlife.

The environmental assessment and comments received from tribes and other agencies have been used to determine whether the proposed action requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement. Adverse impacts identified for this action were determined not to be significant. These impacts would include a temporary noise increase during construction and the displacement of resident wildlife. There are not expected to be any adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species as a result of the proposed project. Erosion control methods would be utilized during construction.

It is my finding, based on the environmental assessment, that the proposed Federal activity will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment and that the proposed project will not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The proposed action has been coordinated with the appropriate resource agencies, and there are no significant unresolved issues. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Date: JAN 17 2001

Mark E. Tillotson
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

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1. INTRODUCTION

Project Authority

The Corps of Engineers and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) propose to build a Resource and Education Center (REC) at Ponca State Park in the State of Nebraska. This project would include the construction of a 15,000 square foot REC building, a constructed treatment wetland, a 1.5 acre lake, a system of geothermal wells for use as part of a heat pump system, a new entrance road, and a parking lot. The constructed lake would receive the used water from the heat pump system. Wastewater from the building would run through a 6 inch sewer line into a septic tank and from the septic tank through another sewer line into the constructed wetland. The REC was authorized by Section 707 of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (TL 95-625). This act amended the National Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968 (90-542). The facility is designed in accordance with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State of Nebraska, and the National Park Service standards and requirements.

Location

Ponca State Park is located two miles north of the City of Ponca in Dixon County, Nebraska. The Park is currently accessed off of Nebraska Highway 12 on S-26E. Ponca State Park is situated astride the bluffs of the Missouri River in the extreme northeast region of Nebraska. Ponca State Park contains 1,269 acres; 295 acres of which are tallgrass prairie, flood plain bottomland, and wet meadows. The remaining area consists of eastern deciduous forest. The exact location of the project within the park is described as the Northeast ¼ of Section 10, Township 30 North, Range 6 East, Dixon County, Nebraska. The entire park is within the boundaries of the Missouri National Recreational River. The Highland Oaks Public Golf course is located on the southern boundary of the park.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the REC is to provide visitors with the opportunity to learn about the significance and history of the Missouri River. Through the REC, visitors would be able to enhance their knowledge of river history. Basic information and orientation regarding the uniqueness and value of the Missouri River would be made available to all visitors of the REC. This information would include regional history (Native Americans, Lewis and Clark, and steamboats), natural history (flora, fauna, endangered species, and ecology), river dynamics (exhibits demonstrating contrasts between natural and altered rivers), restoration projects (mitigation, conservation easements, and success stories), and National Recreational Rivers (their intent, purpose, and future). Furthermore, the REC would also serve to provide more office space for staff members and accommodate the increasing number of visitors anticipated for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial 2002-2004.

Presently, the park has 14 cabins and 72 campsites with electrical hookups. Activities and facilities available at the Park include guided horseback rides, a swimming pool, river access, and over 17 miles of hiking trails. As previously mentioned, there is a need for expanded

office space and additional visitors facilities within Ponca State Park. The current Ponca headquarters office is no longer able to service visitors and park staff adequately. Due to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial 2002-2004, Ponca State Park is already experiencing an increase in the number of visitors. Currently, no structure exists within the park to accommodate these visitors. This increase in volume of visitors, lack of office space, and traffic congestion has produced considerable impairment to Park activities. The NGPC (the local sponsor) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have proposed to construct a new visitor center to accommodate the influx of visitors and provide a more suitable atmosphere in which to explore and learn about the Missouri River system.

3. ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives were considered for this project before the preferred site was selected. These include three alternative locations within Ponca State Park and the no-action alternative. Each site was analyzed based on criteria including location within the park, utility availability, soils, aesthetics, accessibility, ease of snow removal, and availability of land for future expansion. A map showing the three alternative locations can be found at Appendix C.

Site A and Site B were eliminated because of their location. Neither of these sites have existing water, electricity, roads, or phone services available within close proximity. Furthermore, the steep topography of Site A and Site B would make snow removal difficult.

The No Action Alternative was considered but eliminated because this alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the proposed project, and the facilities at Ponca State Park would remain inadequate to meet the needs of current and future visitors of the park.

The preferred alternative, Site C, was chosen because it best met all of the criteria used to evaluate the sites. The selected site, overlooking the Missouri River, would also provide an excellent view of the unchannelized portion of the Missouri River and give visitors an idea of what the river looked like historically in its natural state before it was severely altered by man.

Project Description

The Wild and Scenic River Act includes the Missouri National Recreational River, a 59-mile segment of the Missouri River from Ponca State Park (Nebraska) to Gavins Point Dam (South Dakota and Nebraska). Cooperative management of this Recreational River has been legislated to the National Park Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The management of this area includes land protection, resource management, interpretation, recreational development, and visitor use.

The proposed REC project would be located high on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River in the southeast portion of Ponca State Park. The REC would serve as a recreational and educational campus. Visitors would be able to participate in various activities such as overnight conferences, seminars, or family reunions, and in the future would have the convenience of cabins within walking distance to the REC. Trails would connect cabins to the REC, the

Highland Oaks Public Golf Course, the Missouri River, and many other Ponca State Park features.

The REC is planned to be a 15,000 square foot, single story building. Exposed structural timbers and stone work would be rough and rustic to match the type of construction used in the existing park shelters constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930's. The intent is to give Ponca State Park its own character and a sense of place within the Nebraska State Park system.

The facility is designed to accommodate 250 visitors and 5 staff members. Visitors would likely consist of busloads of school children, vacationers, corporations, university classes, enthusiasts interested in the natural resources of the area, and those wanting to learn about the Missouri River. The REC would house an exhibit hall, multi-purpose conference rooms, and administrative/support space. Activities in the REC would include interpretive exhibits, displays, meetings, and conferences for recreation and learning. The rest of the facility is in direct support of these primary functions. The REC would be designed to incorporate provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.

The building design has no unusual or specialized requirements that would produce negative environmental problems. Utility systems would be designed to meet all State and local codes. Potable water would be supplied by the City of Ponca from a new water supply line designed and constructed by the NGPC.

Prior to construction on the site, an old gas line that runs through the construction area will be taken out of service. The gas line will be shut down, and the remaining gas will be flushed out of the pipe with water. Once the gas is removed from the pipe, it will be capped on both ends and left in place. However, portions of the pipe that run through areas to be excavated for construction of the REC will be removed.

The wastewater collection system would require a new 6-inch gravity sanitary sewer line to a septic tank and a constructed wetlands wastewater treatment system. Heating and cooling of the building would be accomplished by the use of a heat pump system on a geothermal well system. Water would be discharged from the heat pump system into a new 1.5 acre lake and dam to be designed and constructed as part of this project. Heat pump wells would be drilled and tested for adequacy. A parking lot located adjacent to the REC and a new entrance road into the park would also be constructed as a part of this project.

The runoff from parking areas would be collected by storm drains and sent to collection and sedimentation basins and would then be contained onsite adjacent to the parking lot to eliminate any surface discharge. Grading, seeding, and landscaping would eliminate erosion problems. Nebraska Public Power District currently serves the area. Power runs overhead along the west side of the main entrance road. A new underground line would be constructed to the REC site for power supply.

The State of Nebraska would be responsible for coordination and acquiring all permits and approvals required for the new water supply line, new septic tank, the constructed wetland

wastewater treatment system, lake and dam, wells, removal of trees, and site grading. The NGPC would be responsible for obtaining a Nebraska National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Discharge during Construction Permit if an area of five acres or more is disturbed due to construction. The Corps of Engineers would be responsible for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and obtaining all necessary permits for the construction of the REC, the parking lot, and utility service lines to the building.

The placement and design of the REC would follow the guidelines for zoning and new construction set forth in the *1999 Final General Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement for the Missouri National Recreational River*. The following list describes how these guidelines would be followed:

1. The REC would be constructed high on a bluff, well outside of the 100-year flood plain.

2. The REC would be set back more than 1,300 feet from the Missouri River.

3. A fairly thick stand of existing large trees would screen the view of the REC from the river, however, a small number of these trees may be removed to provide a view of the river from the REC. The REC would be a one-story building, so only a very small portion of the building may be visible over the tops of the trees.

4. The exterior of the building would include exposed structural timbers and rough and rustic stone work that would match the type of construction used in the existing park structures.

5. The color of the building would be a subtle earth tone similar to that found in the surrounding environment.

Specification Section 01410 (Environmental Protection) would be included in the construction contract and would ensure general environmental concerns common to construction projects are addressed during construction.

4. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Climate

The area near the project maintains a typical continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. Rainfall is moderate. The temperatures and rainfall vary greatly from day to day and from season to season. The average annual temperature near the project is 64 degrees Fahrenheit, with extremes ranging from 102 degrees Fahrenheit in summer to –22 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter. Normal lows in the winter are 26.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Normal highs during the summer range from 80 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit

Normal annual rainfall within the project area averages approximately 26.1 inches. About three-fourths of the average annual precipitation normally falls from April to September, during the growing season. Large deviations from the average annual precipitation do occur.

Topography and Soils

Ponca State Park is situated in the rolling loess-covered Missouri River bluffs in northeastern Nebraska overlooking the only unchannelized portion of the Missouri River bordering the state.

The oldest geologic materials exposed in the project area are from the Cretaceous age and include Graneros shale, Greenhorn limestone, and Dakota sandstone. These materials crop out in the bluff areas near Ponca and in isolated areas along the deeply dissected bluffs. The Dakota sandstone is of economic importance in some areas, serving as a source of water for domestic and livestock use.

Continental glaciers of the Nebraska and Kansas stages entered Dixon County and Nebraska from the northeast. They covered the Cretaceous-age bedrock with glacial debris that is a heterogeneous mass of sand, clay, silt, and some gravel and boulders.

The soils of Dixon County formed in alluvium, sandy glacial outwash, and loess. A few outcroppings of sedimentary sandstone bedrock and glacial till are in the bluffs or on slopes of deeply entrenched drainageway. The largest area of these outcrops is near Ponca and on bluffs adjacent to the Missouri River Valley. About 78 percent of the total area of Dixon County has soils that formed in Peoria loess. It is a brown or pale brown, wind-deposited material that consists mainly of silt particles but includes smaller amounts of clay and sand. About 18 percent of the soils in Dixon County formed in alluvium of different origins and age. Alluvium consists of sediment deposited by water along major streams and in narrow drainageways of the uplands. About 7 percent of the county is an upland area that is made up of eolian sandy and loamy material.

Flood Plain

The proposed REC would be located high on Bluffer Hill outside the 500-year flood boundary; therefore, the project would not be expected to impact the flood plain.

Water Quality

Ground water quality in the project area is not considered good. It contains elevated levels of iron magnesium and hydrogen sulfide rendering it unsuitable for drinking.

Air Quality

The air quality in the project area is generally good. The project area is in the Nebraska Intrastate Air Quality Region. No heavy industry occurs in the area.

Socioeconomic

The nearest urban area to project area is the City of Ponca, which maintains a population of approximately 1,062 people. Established in 1859, Ponca is the fourth oldest city in the state of Nebraska. Currently, Ponca contains over seventy businesses including agriculture, financial, auto, professional, construction, motel, and retail.

Housing ranges from $6,000 to $10,000 per lot range with new homes costing $60 to sixty-five dollars per square foot. Ponca Public School has a K-12 enrollment of 424 students and various educational programs.

Cultural Resources

According to sources, such as the Management Plan for the Missouri National Recreational River, several different kinds of sites could potentially be found in the project area. These include burial mounds, base camps, habitation sites dating to the Woodland Period; artifact scatters, campsites, and storage pits dating to the Great Oasis complex; and village, house and burial sites associated with the Central Plains Tradition. Native American groups such as the Omaha, Ponca, Santee Sioux, Pawnee, Arikara, Iowa, and Brule Sioux, and Ogalala Sioux used the area in the historic period.

Vegetation

The proposed construction site of the REC is located in a heavily grazed pasture dominated by bromegrass. This pasture was heavily grazed by the Park's horse herd earlier this year and has been used for many years for the same purpose. Prior to this, the land was

cultivated farm land. Other forms of vegetation located in the immediate project area include hairy golden aster, common milkweed, yellow sweet clover, alfalfa, blue phlox, shell-leaf penstemon, blood root, Dutchman's breeches, Canada violet, prairie larkspur, purple coneflowers, pasque flower, and purple prairie clover. The sewage lagoon would be located in a draw in the pasture, and the man-made lake would be located in a forested area near the REC. Trees and shrubs in this area include the plains cottonwood, snowberry, walnut, elm, Kentucky coffee tree, ironwood, bur oak, basswood, eastern red cedar, wild plum, hackberry, gray dogwood, chokecherry, green ash, Russian olive, and smooth sumac.

Other Species of Concern

Species that are either State-listed endangered or threatened, or are being tracked (due to rarity) by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park include:

- American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) is a State listed threatened species which has been documented in Ponca State Park. None have been documented within the proposed projected area.
- Short's Rock-Cress (*Arabis shorti*) - Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park.
- Small White Leek (*Allium tricoccum*) - Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park.
- Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*) - Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park.
- Rock Elm (*Ulmus thomasii*) - Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park.
- Black-Fruit Mt. Ricegrass (*Oryzopsis racemosa*) - Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park.

Communities Tracked by the Heritage Database for Ponca State Park

- Oak Woodlands
- Northeastern Upland Forest
- Tallgrass Prairie

Wetlands

The proposed project area is located on a well-drained hill covered with upland vegetation. According to National Wetland Inventory maps for the area (see Appendix C), no wetlands are present. This was confirmed during site visit on December 2, 1999 by biologists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District.

Wildlife

The proposed project area contains relatively poor quality habitat that does not support large numbers of wildlife. However, wildlife species that would be expected to occasionally use

the area include white-tail deer, mule deer, coyotes, skunks, raccoons, opossums, various voles and mice, tree frogs, bull (gopher) snakes, red foxes, bobcats, and an occasional gray fox.

Birds that occasionally use the area include scarlet tanagers, northern orioles, red-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings, black-capped chickadees, wild turkeys, and eastern meadowlarks. Raptors are also plentiful within the region such as red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, turkey vultures, and bald eagles.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Table 1 below shows the threatened and endangered species known to occur in Dixon County, Nebraska according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Most of these species, with the exception of the American burying beetle, are closely associated with the river

Table 1
Threatened and Endangered Species in the Proposed Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	Classification
Bald eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	Threatened
Interior least tern	*Sterna antillarum*	Endangered
Piping plover	*Charadrius melodus*	Threatened
American burying beetle	*Nircophorus americanus*	Endangered

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Topography and Soils

The topography of the proposed project area would be altered by construction. However, because the area to be excavated is a highly disturbed area that has been cultivated and heavily grazed for years, it is unlikely that significant impacts would occur.

Water Quality

Slight impacts to water quality in receiving streams, creeks, or the Missouri River due to construction runoff after vegetation removal could occur. However, Best Management Practices will be used to minimize these impacts, and a NPDES permit would be obtained if more than five acres are disturbed.

Air Quality

Short-term, localized impacts to air quality could occur during construction consisting predominantly of exhaust from construction equipment. The State of Nebraska does not allow fugitive dust at construction sites. No significant reduction of air quality is expected due to the proposed project. Under the Nebraska Air Quality Standards, no person may cause or permit a building or its appurtenances, or a road, or a driveway, or an open area to be constructed, used, repaired, or demolished without applying all such reasonable measures to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne so that it remains visible beyond the premises where it originates.

Cultural Resources

The National Register of Historic Places and its current supplements were consulted by archaeologists from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District to determine if eligible or listed properties would be affected by the proposed project. No eligible or listed sites were located in the proposed project area; however, there were some sites listed in the towns of Ponca, and Newcastle, Nebraska. A pedestrian survey for cultural resources was performed at the proposed project site on December 2, 1999. No cultural resources were found during this survey. Although no cultural resources were found during this survey, it is possible that buried cultural resources could be discovered during construction. In the event that cultural resources are discovered during construction, all work would cease immediately, and a professional archeologist would be contacted to evaluate the resources. Appendix A contains a cultural resource reconnaissance study of the area and the cultural resource and tribal coordination documents including a letter of concurrence from the Nebraska State Historical Society stating that the proposed project will not affect any historic context property resources.

Socioeconomic

Construction of the proposed project is likely to increase traffic and visitor volume within the project area. Public services such as snow removal, police protection, and fire protection would also be required within this area of the park. Furthermore, with the increase of visitors to the park, the town of Ponca may benefit economically when park visitors spend their money in the town going to and from the park.

Currently, noise levels are minimal within the project area. These levels are expected to rise temporarily as project construction commences, and return to "normal levels" once construction is complete. Once the new facility opens, noise levels in the project area may increase slightly due to the increased traffic and visitor volume associated with the new facility.

Vegetation

The vegetation, which currently exists on the 15 acre proposed project site and consists of heavily grazed bromegrass pasture and approximately 1.5 acres of eastern deciduous forest, would be lost. This loss would not be considered significant because of the general abundance of the species to be lost in the surrounding area, and because the existing vegetation, the majority of which consists of bromegrass, provides little habitat value to wildlife. There are no threatened or endangered plants in the proposed project area.

An estimate of the number of trees that could be removed due to the construction of the man-made lake is provided in the table below.

Species	Count
American, Siberian, and/or Slippery Elm	152
Ironwood	36
Green Ash	23
Hackberry	22
Bur Oak	8
Basswood	5
Eastern Red Cedar	1

Native trees would be planted throughout the project area to mitigate the removal of some of these trees. Furthermore, most of the trees that would be removed average less than 4 inches in diameter and do not provide suitable habitat for most of the wildlife species utilizing the area.

Wildlife

Construction of this project (REC, parking lot, lake, constructed wetland, new entrance road, and detention pond) and the consequent removal of approximately 15 acres of vegetation has the potential to adversely impact resident wildlife. Possible impacts include direct displacement of wildlife due to construction of the different project features, increased road kills, and indirect displacement of wildlife due to the increased numbers of humans in the area. Although there is some potential for impacts to wildlife, these impacts are not expected to be significant. Wildlife living within the 15 acres proposed for construction would be permanently displaced. However, this would be considered a minor impact, because there is abundant habitat in and around the park for these animals to disperse into, and the numbers of wildlife using these 15 acres are relatively small due to the limited habitat that is present.

The presence of the new facility would cause increased traffic volume in this area of the park. The increased traffic volume could potentially increase the chances for road kills to occur in the project area. However, posted speed limits would be slow enough to allow motorists to avoid collisions with wildlife, and the habitat that the roads would cross does not support large numbers of wildlife; therefore, the number of road kills is still expected to be very low. For these reasons, the increased risk of road kills in the area is expected to be insignificant.

The proposed construction site is located in an area of the park that currently gets less use than other areas of the park. For this reason, some of the wildlife in the area may not be as habituated to human disturbance as those in some of the higher use areas. As a result, some of these animals may move away from the proposed construction site into areas of less human use once construction begins. This impact is also not expected to be significant because there is ample suitable habitat for wildlife to move into within the park and on private land bordering the park.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not provide a list of federally endangered species. See Appendix B for comments. Federally listed endangered and threatened species are not located within the specific proposed project site. Federally listed endangered and threatened species do occur within the surrounding area of the project, mainly along the Missouri River and include the bald eagle, interior least tern, and piping plover. However, none of these species utilize the habitat type found in the proposed project area. See Appendix E for a complete description of endangered species occurring in the surrounding area of the proposed project.

- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – (T)

Project Area: Bald eagles have been observed utilizing areas along the Missouri River for feeding and roosting. Within the project area, bald eagles have been seen overhead. However, it is unlikely that the eagles would be impacted by the construction of the REC as most of the activities of the eagles occur along the river.

- Interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) – (E)

Project Area: Interior least terns have been observed feeding along the Missouri River in the proposed project area during migration. Potential nesting habitat does exist within the Missouri River valley adjacent to Ponca State Park. However, because the proposed project is located high on a hill, well outside of the river valley, no Interior least tern habitat would be impacted

- Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) – (T)

Project Area: Piping plovers have been observed feeding on the sand beaches along the Missouri River near Ponca State Park. Potential nesting habitat does exist in areas along the river. However, because the proposed project is located high on a hill, well outside of the river valley, no piping plover habitat would be impacted.

- American Burying Beetle (*Nircophorus americanus*) – (E)

Project Area: No American burying beetles have been documented within the proposed project area, and no surveys have been conducted; therefore, their status in the park is currently unknown. The NGPC is currently considering surveying locations near the proposed project area

for American burying beetles. However, according to the NGPC, the project area itself is considered unsuitable habitat for the American burying beetle due to its highly disturbed state.

6. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are caused by the aggregate of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative effects are analyzed in terms of the specific resource, ecosystem, and human community being affected. The cumulative effects to be considered are the result of the following aggregate projects:

1. **Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions.** Potential future projects include the addition of more cabins, new swimming pool construction, upgrading the roads, and possibly adding a sledding hill.
2. **Past Actions.** Past actions falling within the scope of analysis which may contribute to the net impact on habitat include the construction of the Highland Oaks Public Golf course located on the southern boundary of the park, the relocation of the hay barn, and the relocation of the horse winter pasture.
3. **Proposed Project.** The proposed project, which includes the construction of a new visitors center and parking lot, the construction of a dam, lake, roads, and a wetland lagoon would be considered additive impacts to the existing park infrastructure.

The primary resources that would be directly affected by this action are approximately 15 acres of pasture and woodlands and their associated resident wildlife. Indirect impacts in the area would be both negative and positive. These would include:

1. **Increased visitation and spending in the town of Ponca.**
2. **Increased traffic flow through the town of Ponca and Ponca State Park.**
3. **Increased disturbance and displacement of wildlife due to construction and increased visitor volume.**
4. **A net loss of grasslands and forest habitat as a result of building, cabin, swimming pool, treatment wetland, road, and lake construction.**
5. **Increased recreational use along the Missouri River due to increased visitor volume at Ponca State Park.**
6. **Higher pubic visibility of Ponca State Park as a recreational and educational area.**

Cumulative Conclusion

As described throughout earlier sections of the EA, Ponca State Park is located in an area of low human populations with little development. This project is expected to result in direct impacts to a small amount of habitat due to excavation, fill, flooding, and clearing. Alteration of topography, habitat fragmentation, water quality impacts, contaminant runoff, and direct mortality from road kills would be considered cumulative impacts affecting the Ponca State Park region.

The portion of the park where the proposed project would be constructed is considered to be an area of lesser public use when compared to other areas of the park. An increase in traffic would also be anticipated due to the upcoming Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and the construction of the Vermillion Bridge, which would increase visitor access.

The construction of this project would transform this region into one of high public use thus contributing to the reduction of wildlife habitat. However, this project is not expected to provide an increment, which would result in or contribute significant adverse cumulative impacts. This conclusion was established based on the small amount of habitat to be effected, and the beneficial effects to the human environment provided by the project such as increased public awareness of the Missouri River system, increased regional economic activity, and increased opportunities to expand public knowledge of threatened and endangered species.

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7. REFERENCES

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Stansberry, Brooke, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission - Wildlife Heritage.

Final General Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement, Missouri National Recreational River, Nebraska/South Dakota, 1999.

Recreational Rivers Resource and Education Center, Ponca State Park, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Four-phase plan.

50% Design Analysis, Resource and Education Center (REC), Ponca State Park, NE, May 2000 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cultural Resources

A CULTURAL RESOURCE RECONNAISSANCE STUDY OF THE PROPOSED PONCA PARK RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTER, DIXON COUNTY, NEBRASKA

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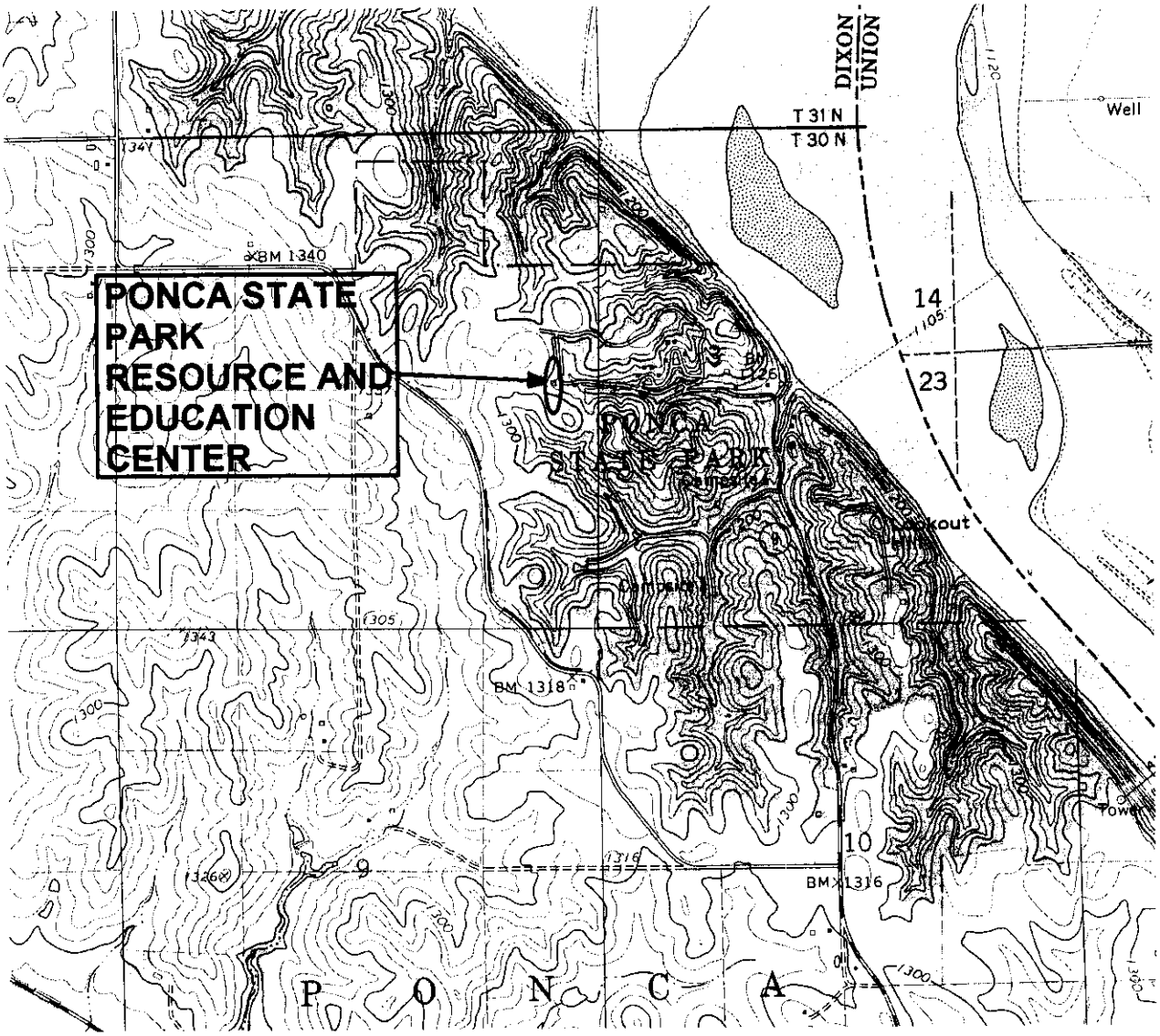
August 2000

I Introduction

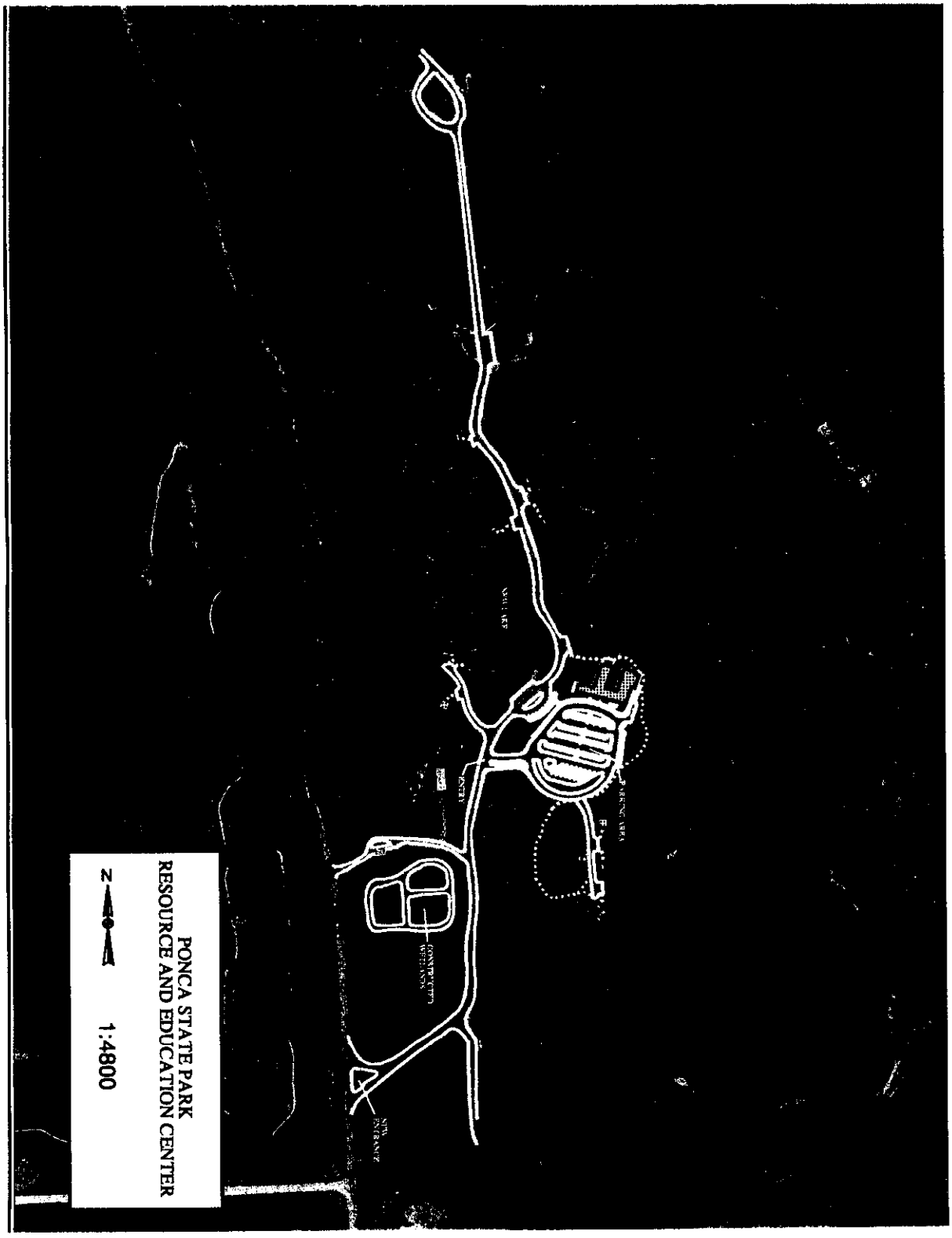
The Omaha District, Corps of Engineers is working with the Nebraska State Games and Parks Commission at Ponca State Park on the proposed construction of a new complex designed to house a resource and education center. This study has been prepared to collect information from available resources to assess the impact that the construction of this project may have on cultural resources. The project is located approximately 2 miles north of the town of Ponca, in northeast Nebraska.

II Project Description

The project is located in the SE 1/4, NE 1/4 of section, Township 30 North, Range 6 East, Dixon County, Nebraska (see USGS Quadrangle map below). The project will consist of construction of a new building, associated parking lots, a lake and a wetland (see aerial photograph below). This complex will be near the existing horse stables for Ponca State Park



PONCA, NEBR.-S. DAK 1964 7.5 min. USGS QUADRANGLE MAP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III Study Methods

The methods employed in this study are in compliance with various State, Federal and Department of the Army guidelines, in particular "Nebraska State Historic Preservation Guidelines for Protection of Archeological Properties Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act" issued in October 1989 by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Society; 7 CFR 656; 36 CFR Part 800; and AR 420-40. These guidelines call for a literature review and a summation of data currently known about the study area. The following study methods were used to accomplish the goals outlined in the above study definition.

A. Records Search. All records concerning archeological resources including unpublished manuscripts, site reports, survey reports, relevant correspondence and military records were consulted.

B. National Register Consultation. The purpose of this step was to determine the proximity of current "National Register" properties to project area. The cumulative and updated listing of the "National Register", which is available at the following URL http://www.nr.nps.gov/nrloc1.htm, was consulted. The following sites are listed in Dixon County, Nebraska:

	Name	Address	City	Date Listed
1	Cook Blacksmith Shop	204 3rd Street	Ponca	1974-12-27
2	Dixon County Courthouse	3rd and Iowa Streets	Ponca	1990-01-10
3	Indian Hill Archeological District	Address Restricted	Newcastle	1984-07-06
4	Ponca Historic District	Roughly bounded by East, Court, 2nd and 3rd Streets.	Ponca	1979-05-18
5	Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Salem Church	Off NE 35	Wakefield	1983-02-01

None of the sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places are located in the project area.

IV Record Search

The records at the Nebraska State Historical Society were examined on July 31, 2000 by Edward Brodnicki, staff archeologist. Three sites are located within a mile of the project area; these sites include:

25DX4 (Enders Site). This site is located in the NW 1/4 of section 29, Township 31

North, Range 6 East. This site was recorded by Stanley Bartos in 1938. This location is described in the site form as "on a high hill overlooking Missouri River in corn-field that has been tilled over a long period". The site was excavated by the University of Nebraska and consisted of an "ossuary" or burial. That may date to the Nebraska Phase or Woodland Phase.

25DX8. The site is 2 acres in size and is located on "rolling, secondary Missouri River Bluffs". Site 25DX4 is located 1 mile north-northeast of this site. The site is in S 1/4, E 1/4 (sic), Section 32, Township 31 North, Range 6 East, according to the site form. The site consists of an occupation (house according to the site form) and a burial that date to the Nebraska Phase. The burials were unearthed by the landowner while plowing. The site was recorded by Stanley Bartos in 1938.

25DX97. This site is located "just east of center" (according to the site form) in Section 29, Township 31 North, Range 6 East. It is described as a scatter over 300 feet long on a stream terrace in a plowed field. Artifacts observed were pottery, lithics and bone; this material dates to the St. Helena phase. The site was recorded by Donald Blakeslee in 4/86.

According to other sources, such as the Management Plan for the Missouri River Recreation River, sites that would be expected in the project area include burial mounds, base camps, habitation sites that date to the Woodland Period; artifact scatter, campsites, storage pits that date to the Great Oasis complex; village, house and burial sites associated with the Central Plains Tradition. The area was used in the historic period be Native American groups such as the Omaha, Ponca, Santee Sioux, Pawnee, Arikara, Ioway, Brule and Oglala Sioux.

V Field Reconnaissance

A cultural resource reconnaissance study was made of the project area on December 2, 1999 by Edward Brodnicki, MA. The area was approximately 10 acres in size and required 1 1/2 hours to survey. Most of the project area was in grass and surrounded by forest. Several structures, located near the area labeled "Parking area" on the aerial photograph are now used as the horse stables for the park.

No cultural resources were observed in the project area. The area appears to have been cultivated in the past, which would have disturbed any cultural resources in the plowzone.

VI Recommendations and Conclusions

No cultural resources were found in the project area. It is possible that buried cultural resources are located in the project area. The project should proceed, but in

the event that cultural resources are observed during construction, the work will cease immediately and the resources will be evaluated by a professional archeologist.

VII References

1999 United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement: Missouri National Recreational River, Cedar and Dixon Counties, Nebraska; Yankton, Clay and Union Counties, South Dakota

Edward Brodnicki
Staff Archeologist

Subject: Proposed Ponca State Park Resource and Visitors Center
Native American Consultation

Dear
The purpose of this letter is to solicit Native American input and initiate consultation for the proposed resource and visitors center planned at Ponca State Park. The Omaha District Corps of Engineers (Corps) is beginning work on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. We invite your participation and comments, as required by 36 CFR 800.2(C)(3), throughout the review process to ensure that Native American concerns are adequately addressed and identified.

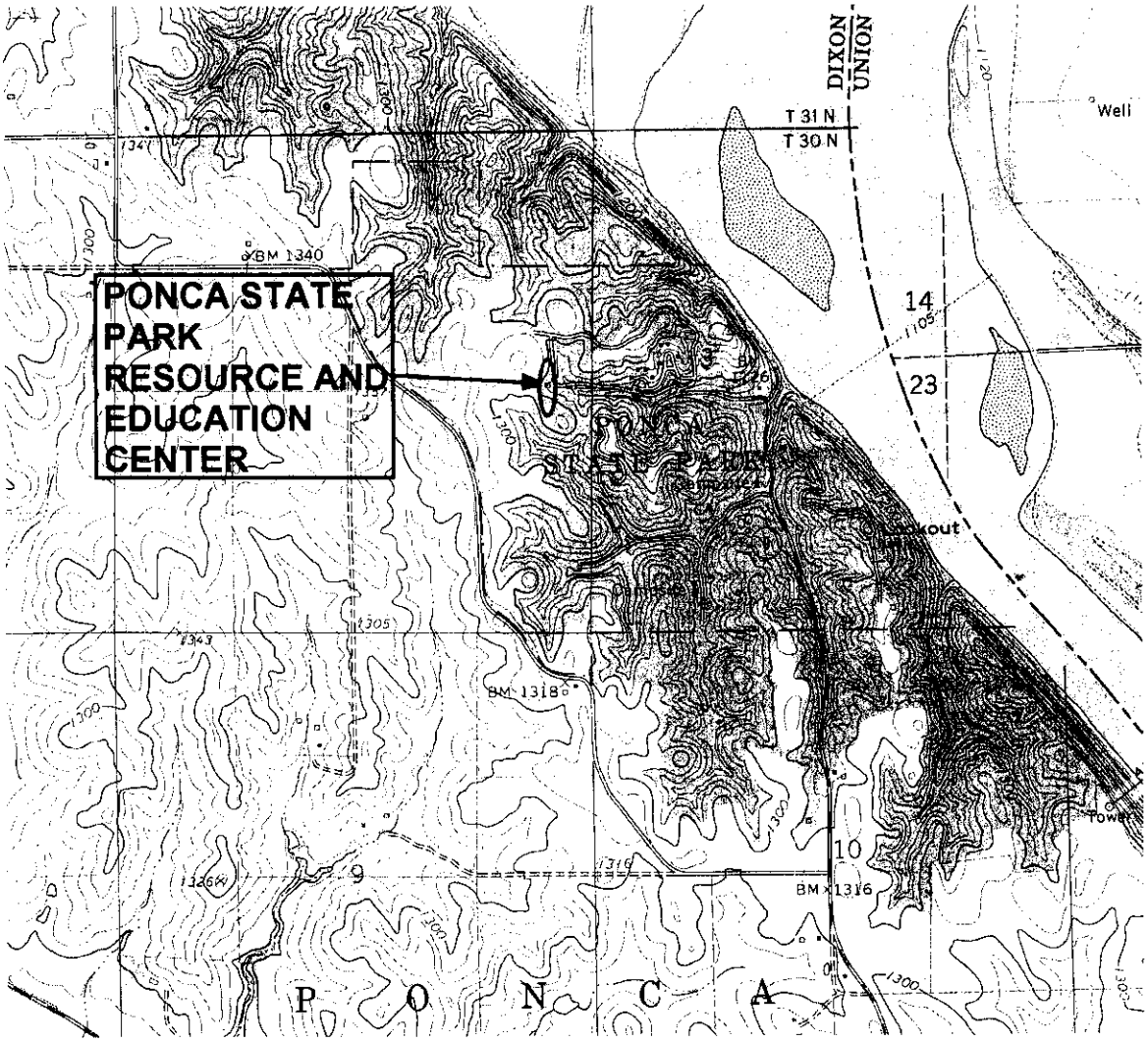
The proposed project area is at the Ponca State Park located two miles north of the city of Ponca in Dixon County, Nebraska. The proposed project islocated within Ponca Statre Park, approximately two mile north of Ponca, Nebraska, as shown in the attached figure. Preliminary inquiries indicate the project area was historically used by the Omaha, Ponca, Santee Sioux, Pawnee, Arikara, Iowa, Brule and Oglala Sioux.

The Corps is soliciting any comments you may have concerning this project area. To ensure that we do not overlook something that is of importance to you or your tribe, we are initiating consultation with Native American tribes such as yours. We remain open to your input and any new information you may provide.

Please review the map included in the report for places or areas of heritage or contemporary concern. Any information that we receive on sacred sites will be strictly confidential and no information on sacred sites will be released without your full and complete agreement.

The preliminary mailing list for Native American consultation is also enclosed for your review. If you know of others who should be included on the list, please let us know. We will contact you by telephone to discuss the project and Native American consultation when you wish.

We have completed a cultural resource reconnaissance study of the project area. A copy of this report is included with this letter.



If you wish any more detailed information or have any comments, please let us know at your earliest convenience. Please contact Edward Brodnicki of the Omaha District at 402-221-4888 or edward.c.brodnicki@usace.army.mil with any questions on the project. Thank you for your time in reviewing this project.

Sincerely,

Col. Tillotson

Enclosures: Project Area Map
Preliminary Mailing List

Oglala Lakota Tribe
Wilbur Between Lodges, Acting President
Oglala Sioux Tribe
P.O. Box H
Pine Ridge, SD 57770
P: 605/867-5821
F: 605/867-1373 or 605/867-5659

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
Robert L. Chapman, President
Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 470
Pawnee, OK 74058
P: 918/762-3621
F: 918/762-2389

Chairman	Elmer	Blackbird	Chairman	Omaha Tribal Council	P.O. Box 368	Macy	NE
Mr.	James	Parker		Omaha Tribal Council	P.O. Box 368	Macy	NE
							OK
							OK
							OK
Chairman	Fred	LeRoy	Chairman	Ponca Tribe of Nebraska	P.O. Box 288	Niobrara	NE
Mr.	Phillip	Wendzillo		Ponca Tribe of Nebraska	P.O. Box 288	Niobrara	NE
Mr.	Louis	Headman		Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma	20 White Eagle Drive	Ponca City	OK
Mr.	Maynard	Hinman		Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma	20 White Eagle Drive	Ponca City	OK
Chairman	A. Lionel	LeClair	Chairman	Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma	20 White Eagle Drive	Ponca City	OK
							SD
							SD

Mr.	Louis	LaRose		Winnebago Tribal Council	P.O. Box 687	Winnebago	NE
Chairman	Daryl	LaPointe, Sr.	Chairman	Winnebago Tribal Council	P.O. 687	Winnebago	NE

Mr.	David	Smith	NAGPRA Coordinator	Winnebago Tribal Council	P.O. Box 687	Winnebago	NE
Mr.	Allen	Hare	NAGPRA Representative	Yankton Sioux Tribe	P.O. Box 248	Marty	SD
Ms.	Judi	Morgan	Executive Director	Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs	P.O. Box 94981	Lincoln	NE

Arthur "Butch" Denney
Chairman
Santee Sioux Tribal Council
Route 2
Niobrara, NE 68760

Marianne Long
NAGPRA Coordinator
Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
Route 1, Box 721
Perkins, OK 74059

Lawrence P. Murray
Chairman
Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
Route 1, Box 721
Perkins, OK 74059

Chairman	Tex	Hall	Chairman	Three Affiliated Tribes Business Council	HC 3, Box 2	New Town	ND
Mr.	Elgin	Crows Breast	NAGPRA Coordinator	Three Affiliated Tribes Business Council	HC 3, Box 2	New Town	ND

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma

P.O. Box 470
Pawnee, Oklahoma 74058
PHONE: 918-762-2541
FAX: 918-762-4043

October 17, 2000

Mr. Mark E. Tollotson, Colonel
District Engineer
Corps of Engineers, Omaha District
215 North 17th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-4978

Dear Mr. Tollotson:

We are writing concerning the proposed construction site at the Ponca State Park.

We know you are aware of the several anthropological sites in that immediate area. We would expect you to proceed with caution. Thank you, your care and concern in this matter is appreciated. I can be contacted at the above address or by telephone at the given number.

Sincerely,

Francis Morris

Mr. Francis Morris, Coordinator
Repatriation Project/Tribal Historical Preservation Officer

Xc: Repatriation File
Robert Chapman, PBC President

November 1, 2000

Planning Branch

Dear :

Previously, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) sent a letter to you dated September 14, 2000 soliciting comments on the proposed construction of the Ponca State Park Resource and Education Center. Since that time, the Corps has completed the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project, which is scheduled for construction beginning in the Spring of 2001.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Draft EA for review, please contact Mr. Luke Wallace of our staff at (402) 221-4885. Mr. Wallace's e-mail address is a.luke.wallace@usace.army.mil, and his regular mailing address is:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: Luke Wallace
CENWO-PM-AE
215 N 17th St.
Omaha, NE 68137

We are now soliciting comments on the draft EA. All comments will be taken into consideration prior to preparing the final EA. Any information or comments you may wish to contribute regarding environmental, cultural, and/or endangered species issues would be greatly appreciated. We request that all comments be submitted to our office no later than November 17, 2000.

If you have any questions please contact Mr. Luke Wallace of my staff at (402) 221-4885.

Sincerely,

Candace M. Gorton
Chief, Environmental and Economics Section
Planning Branch
Planning, Programs and Project
Management Division

Ed 12/1/00

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1500 R STREET, P.O.BOX 82554, LINCOLN, NE 68501-2554
(402) 471-3270 Fax: (402) 471-3100 1-800-833-6747 www.nebraskahistory.org

12 December 2000

Candace M. Gorton
Chief, Environmental & Economics Section
Corps of Engineers
215 North 17th Street
Omaha, NE 68102-4978

Re: Ponca Resource and Education Center
Dixon Co.
H.P. #0007-094-01

Dear Ms. Gorton:

The cultural resources survey report (Brodnicki 2000) on the above referenced project has been reviewed by this office. We concur with the findings of the report that no historic context property resources will be effected by the proposed project.

Sincerely,

Terry Steinacher
H.P. Archaeologist

Concurrence:

L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy NeSHPO

AGENCY LISTING

Mr. Paul Hedren
National Park Service
Box 591
O'Neill, NE 68763

Mr. Wally Jobman
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
203 W. 2nd St.
Grand Island, NE 68801

Mr. Roger Kuhn
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
2200 N. 33rd St.
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503-0370

Mr. Mark Brohman
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
2200 N. 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE 68503

Mr. Clayton Stalling
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
2201 N. 13th St.
Norfolk, NE 68643

Mr. Jeff Fields
Ponca State Park
P.O. Box 688
Ponca, NE 68770

Mr. John Craig
Nebraska Department of Roads
Post Office Box 94759
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Mr. Tom Moser
Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District
Box 518
608 N. Robinson
Hartington, NE 68739

Mr. John Kingsbury
Better Ponca Foundation
Box 570
Ponca, NE 68770

Mr. Jim Peterson
Missouri River Bank Stabilization
Association
503 Poplar Ave.
Vermillion, SD 57069

Wildlife Heritage
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
ATTN: Brooke Stansberry
Bob Harms
2200 North 33rd
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503-0370

Mr. Francis Morris, Coordinator
Repatriation Project
Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 470
Pawnee, OK 74058

Mr. Richard Black
Repatriation Representative
Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
RR1, Box 721
Perkins, OK 74059

CENWO-PM-C (Allen)
CENWO-OD-R-NE-Wehrspann
CENWO-OD-GP

Reed, Margaret K NWO
From: Wally_Jobman@fws.gov
Sent: Thursday, August 03, 2000 8:14 AM
To: Reed, Margaret K NWO
Subject: Re: Ponca Visitor Center

Margaret:

The Service has no problem with the proposed project. No federally listed threatened and endangered species are expected to occur within the project area.

Wally Jobman

cng 11/13/00
Luke

STATE OF NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF ROADS
John L. Craig, *Director*
1 Highway 2
Box 94759
Lincoln NE 68509-4759
Phone (402)471-4567
FAX (402)479-4325
www.dor.state.ne.us

November 13, 2000

Mike Johanns
Governor

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
CENWO-PM-AE (Wallace)
215 North 17th Street
Omaha, NE 68102-4978

Dear Mr. Wallace:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft EA for the Ponca State Park Resource and Education Center. The Nebraska Department of Roads has reviewed the document and has no comment.

Sincerely,

Cynthia L. Veys

Cynthia L. Veys
Environmental Section Manager

Wallace, A Luke NWO

From: Wayne_Werkmeister@nps.gov
Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2000 1:09 PM
To: Wallace, A LUKE
Subject: Draft Environmental Assessment, Ponca State Park, REC

_____ Forward Header _____
Subject: Draft Environmental Assessment, Ponca State Park, REC
Author: Wayne Werkmeister at NP-NIOB
Date: 11/22/00 2:06 PM

Sorry I missed the comment deadline a bit, but a couple quick comments anyway.

1) I would like to see a category titled "visual" included under AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT that would give a description of expected views of the structure from the river and surrounding areas.

2) Page 6 under "Vegetation"
Was it a historically heavily grazed pasture, or is it still? Why?

3) Page 8 under "Topography and Soils"
Why is the area 'highly disturbed'? Was it historically a plowed field?

4) Page 10 under "Wildlife"
What environmental impacts are expected to wildlife from the increased visior use of the park? more road kill? dispersal to private property or other parts of the park? increased domestication, etc.

5) Page 12 under "Cumulative Conclusion" paragraph 3, third sentence. Might be more accurate to add a few words such as... "This conclusion was established based on the small amount of habitat to be effected and the beneficial effects, 'to the human environment' provided by the project ..."

Thanks for the opportunity to comment and if you have any questions give me a call at 402/336-3970.

Better Ponca Foundation, Inc.

"A Great Place to Visit...A Better Place to Live."

P.O. Box 570
Ponca, NE 68770
402-755-2225

Ponca State Park

Missouri National River Resource and Education Center

To: **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
Environmental Assessment Comment

Dear Mr. Wallace and Ms. Gorton:

On behalf of our community charitable corporation and the community on Ponca we want to offer our support for the general findings disclosed in the Draft Environmental Assessment of the Resource and Education Center at Ponca State Park.

After a complete review of the Draft, we find no issues, obstacles or conclusions that might be objectionable to construction of this significant project. Clearly, it will provide significant positive economic, education and cultural benefits not only to our community and surrounding region, but nationally. We offer our full support of the project and would appreciate being made aware of any negative comments or concerns that may arise as a result of this Draft Assessment.

To correct minor portions of the Draft we would note that Ponca State Park comprises nearly 1,500 acres, and not 900 acres as stated. We do not believe the entire Park is within the National River corridor, but we may be wrong? The facility is designed for 250 people for seminars and convention meetings, but a substantially larger number of visitors could be using all portions of the Center at any one time. Mitigation of trees and other resources is likely to be greater than stated in the Draft. Cumulative Impacts are also likely to prove more beneficial than stated. We also believe the location of the proposed Center is incorrectly shown on the topographical maps of the Park.

Again, we offer our strong support for the project and concur with the positive conclusions found in the Draft Assessment.

Sincerely,

John Kingsbury
President

Luke 11/30/00

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

2200 N. 33rd St. / P.O. Box 30370 / Lincoln, NE 68503-0370
Phone: 402-471-0641 / Fax: 402-471-5528 / http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/

November 16, 2000

US Army Corps of Engineers
CENWO-PM-AE (Attn: A. Luke Wallace)
215 North 17th Street
Omaha NE 68102-4978

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment for Ponca State Park: Resource and Education Center; project location is near City of Ponca; Dixon County, NE.

Dear Mr. Wallace:

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) staff members have reviewed the October 2000 DEA identified above. Several NGPC specialists have provided information on threatened/endangered species and their critical habitats, as well as plant community data and Natural Heritage Program records.

A number of inquiries were directed to NGPC staff by Katie Reed at Omaha District Planning Branch and replies were provided. The principal compilation of relevant data was sent to Ms. Reed with a cover letter dated September 6, 2000 (signed by Brooke Stansberry, NGPC Technician II). Supplementary material accompanying this reply appeared to be presented accurately in the October 2000 DEA, pp. 6-12.

A final general recommendation, not noted in the DEA, concerns the need to observe minimal impact to steep slopes of existing natural drainages on and adjacent to the construction site. This would include strict attention to keeping the number of trees and shrubs removed as low as possible. Seven species of woody plants, along with estimated numbers of each species to be removed, are listed on pg. 10 of the DEA. We would be interested in receiving information on how close this estimate comes to post-project conditions.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Albrecht
Environmental Analyst Supervisor

FJA:pz

CC: Bob Harms/Brooke Stansberry, NGPC Wildlife Division
Jeff Fields/Jim Swenson, NGPC Parks Division

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Mike Johanns
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Suite 400, The Atrium
1200 'N' Street
P.O. Box 98922
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-8922
Phone (402) 471-2186

RECEIVED BY
JUL 12 2000
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT DIV.

July 10, 2000

John Moeschen, Wetlands Program Manager
Nebraska Department of Roads
1500 Hwy. 2
PO Box 94759
Lincoln, NE 68509-4759

RE: Issuance of storm water discharge authorization for the Nebraska Department of Roads FY2001 Highway Projects (NPDES Authorization Number NER100099)

Dear Mr. Moeschen:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the CSW-NOI form on June 30, 2000 for the projects referenced above. These projects have authorization to discharge storm water under the terms and conditions of NPDES General Permit NER100000.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (402) 471-2023 or 471-4220.

Sincerely,

Jim Yeggy, Program Specialist
Permits and Compliance Section
Water Quality Division

Local Liaison Division

FY-2001 Stormwater Discharge Permits

County	Control No.	Project No.	Location	Length *(Miles)*	Type of Improvement
Dixon	31011	SRR-26(6)	Ponca State Park	1.00	Grading
Lancaster	12307	SRR-55(127)	Pawnee Lake - Southwest	2.00	Grading, culv., surfacing
Lancaster	12441	SRR-55(132)	Pawnee Lake - Northwest 84th Street	2.00	Asphalt overlay
Lancaster	12306	SRR-55(126)	Pawnee Lake Rec. Road	1.50	Grading, culv., asphalt surfacing
York	41387	BRO-7093(18)	Benedict Northwest	0.10	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Wayne	32007	BRO-7090(12)	Wayne Northwest	0.10	Bridge, grading
Furnas	70703	BRO-7033(24)	Beaver City Northeast	0.10	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Knox	30807	BRO-7054(11)	Bloomfield North	0.10	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Sherman	41767	BRO-7082(14)	Ashton Southeast	0.20	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Hall	41415A	STPE-2235(2)	Grand Island South	0.68	Bridge widening, grading
Cheyenne	50987	STPE-1135(1)	Sidney North	4.50	Asphalt overlay
Clay	41830	STPE-2370(1)	In Edgar	0.40	Asphalt overlay
Buffalo	41224	STPE-2025(6)	Shelton North	3.40	Asphalt overlay
Sheridan	51129	STPE-1240(1)	Smith Lake Southeast	7.40	Armor coat
Keya Paha	80605	STPE-1710(4)	Springview Northwest	3.00	Asphalt overlay
Holt	80679	STPE-2280(4)	O'Neill East	4.00	Asphalt overlay
Harlan	70460	STPE-1732(1)	In Alma	0.30	Grading, culv., asphalt surfacing
McPherson	61098	STPE-1475(4)	Tryon Northwest	13.25	Armor coat
Scotts Bluff	51029	STPE-1060(7)	Minatare Northeast	4.00	Asphalt overlay
Blaine	61140	STPE-1755(9)	Halsey North	4.60	Asphalt overlay
Saunders	12164	BRO-7078(16)	Weston Northwest	0.10	Bridge, gravel surfacing
Polk	41648	BRO-7072(12)	Polk Southeast	0.10	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Otoe	12032	BRO-7066(23)	Nebraska City Southeast	0.10	Bridge, grading, gravel surfacing
Saunders	12375	BR-3430(4)	Colon Northwest	0.20	Bridge

Wallace, A Luke NWO

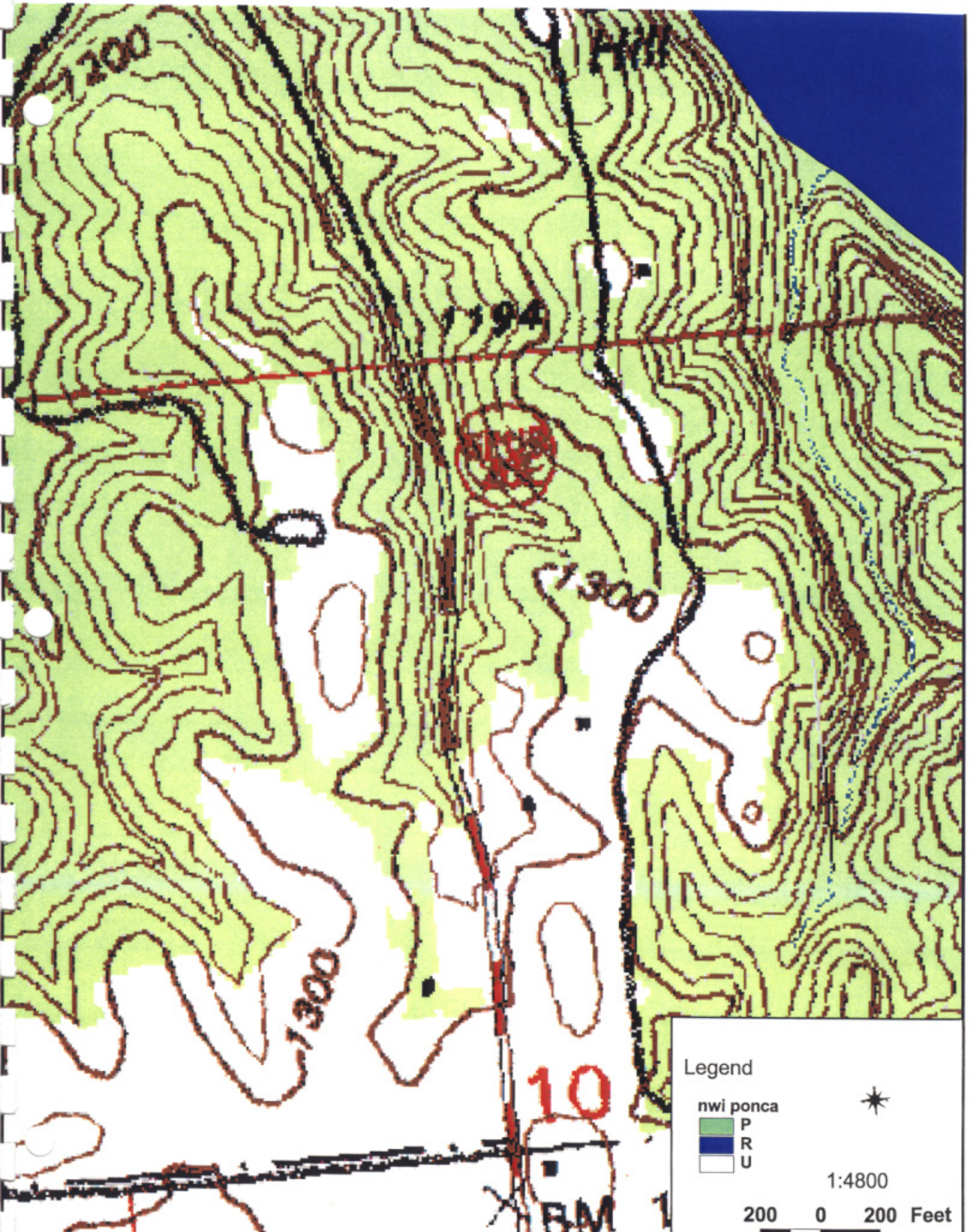
From: Rabbe, Randolph M NWO
ent: Tuesday, November 07, 2000 7:51 AM
fo: Wallace, A Luke NWO
Subject: Ponca REC

Luke. I've looked briefly at the DEA. You mentioned that there were no wetlands. Was this verified or just a desk determination? Aslo are there any 'other waters'? Any creeks or jurisdictional ditches. A survey should be done to ensure no 'Waters of the U.S.' are impacted. No other comments.

Michael Rabbe

Appendix C: Maps


PARKING AREA
NEW LAKE
ENTRY
CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS
NEW ENTRANCE
PONCA STATE PARK
RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTER
N
1:4800


1200
1294
1300
1300
10
Legend
nwi ponca
P
R
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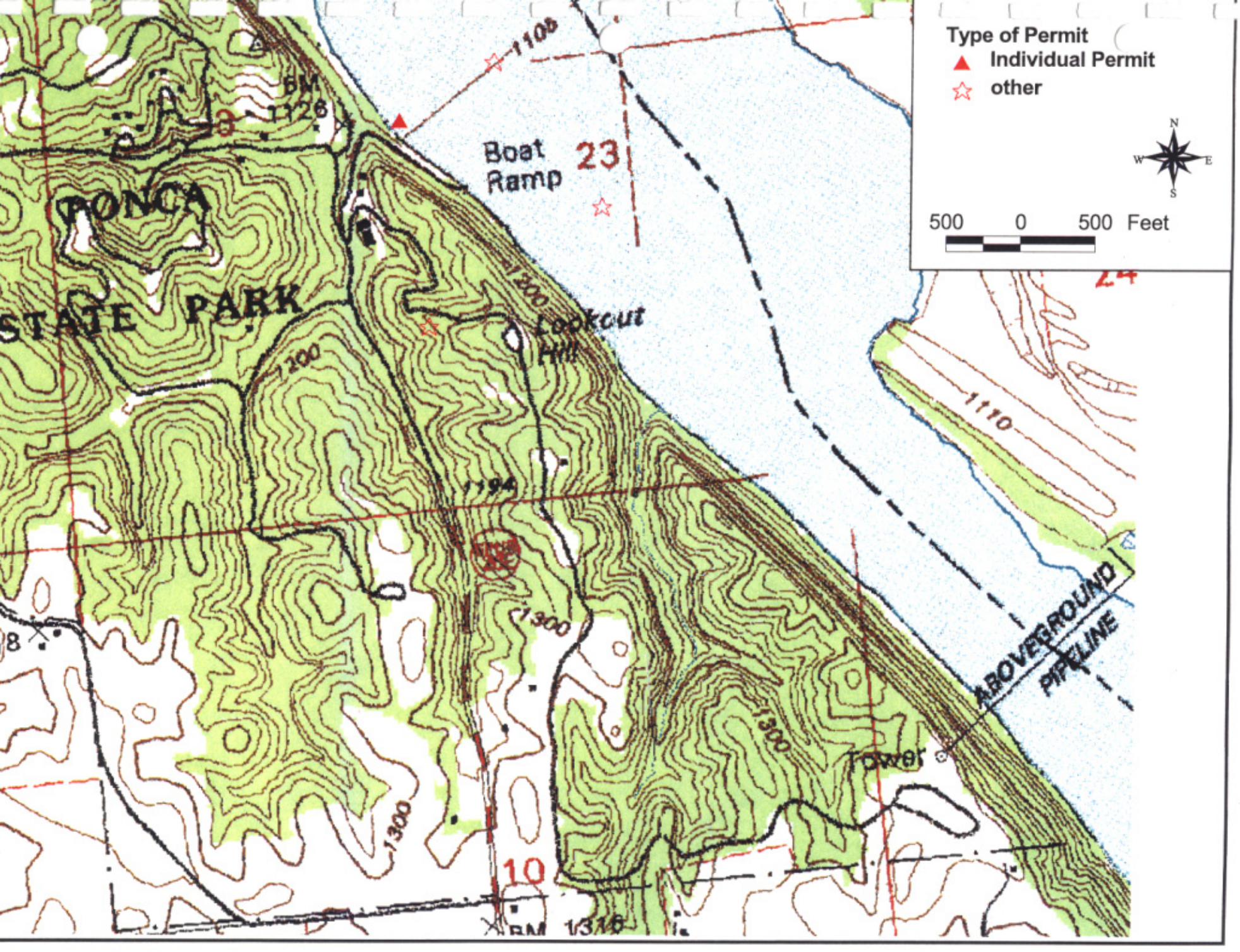
1:4800
200 0 200 Feet


Type of Permit
Individual Permit
other
N
W
E
S
500 0 500 Feet
Boat Ramp
23
PONCA
STATE PARK
Lookout Hill
1100
1200
1300
1110
1194
ABOVEGROUND PIPELINE
Tower
10
BM 1316
BM 1126

Alternative Site Locations for Ponca State Park Research and Education Center

Appendix D: Compliance with Environmental Statutes

COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL STATUTES

Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 469, et seq. In compliance. A Corps archeologist surveyed the proposed project site. No evidence of cultural resources was discovered.

Bald Eagle Protection Act, 16 U.S.C., Secs 668, 668 note, 668a-668d. In compliance. No bald eagles currently utilize land within the project area.

Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 185711-7, et seq. In compliance. Air quality is expected to be slightly but temporarily affected during the construction process. However, impact would be within acceptable levels.

Clean Water Act, as amended, (Federal Water Pollution Control Act) 33 U.S.C. 1251, et seq. In compliance. It is anticipated that water quality would not be affected during the proposed construction.

Endangered Species Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Grand Island, Nebraska was contacted by letter for comments on the potential effects of the proposed project on federally listed threatened and endangered species. On August 3, 2000, the USFWS responded with an e-mail indicating that no federally listed threatened or endangered species were listed in the project area. It has been determined that the proposed action is not likely to adversely effect any federally listed threatened or endangered species.

Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 U.S.C. 4201, et seq. Not applicable. There is no farmland involved with this project.

Federal Water Power Recreation Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 460-1(12), et seq. In compliance. The proposed action would involve the development of Ponca State park and recreation area.

Flood plain Management (E.Q. 11988) 42 CFR 26951. Not applicable. The proposed project is outside of the 500-year flood plain.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. In compliance. An environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) have been prepared for the proposed action. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470a, et seq. The Ponca REC project site was surveyed for cultural resources in 2000. A Corps archaeologist performed a pedestrian survey of the site on March 2000. No artifacts or other evidence of cultural resources were found within the project area. A letter was received from the Nebraska State Historical Society dated December 12, 2000 stating that they concurred with the Corps findings that no historic context property resources would be affected by the proposed project.

Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 4901 to 4918. In compliance. This action will involve construction, however, these effects would be minor and temporary.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 16 U.S. C. Sec. 4401 et. seq. Not applicable. No wetlands would be impacted by this action since none exist in or around the project area.

Protection of Wetlands (E.Q.11990). In compliance. No wetlands would be impacted by the proposed construction.

Rivers and Harbors Act, 33 U.S.C. 401, et seq. Not applicable. This project does not involve any construction or placing of obstructions into navigable waters.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, 16 U.S.C. 1101, et seq. Not applicable.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1271. et seq. In compliance. This area of the Missouri River is included as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Appendix E: Threatened and Endangered Species

Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) – (T)

DESCRIPTION: The Bald eagle is the only sea eagle regularly occurring on the North American continent (American Eagle Foundation, 3/28/00). With a wingspan of 6.5-8 feet it is a large rapture measuring 31-37 inches. Adults (4-5years) have a body brown with contrasting white head and tail while juveniles have a full dark body, dark eyes and beak (USGS, 2/25/00).

HABITAT: The Bald eagle is invariably found near water, particularly large lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and along the coastal areas. Bald eagles prefer areas forested with tall cottonwood trees within 180 feet of the water.

RANGE: Historically, Bald eagles have had a large distribution in the United States and Canada. The wintering grounds of the Bald eagle are located in the Black Hills and within the Pierre-Ft. Pierre and Oahe Dam area in South Dakota.

SOURCE OF POPULATION DECLINE: Decline in population resulted with the advent of DDT after World War II (FWS, 2/9/00). This pesticide caused thinning of eagle shells, resulting in breakage prior to hatching. The Bald eagle was added to the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife in 1978 and a recovery plan was initiated (FWS, 2/9/00). The success of the recovery program can be greatly attributed to the banning of DDT in 1972. Habitat degradation has also played a significant role in the bald eagle population decline. The clearing of tall trees along river systems have virtually eliminated prime roosting sites for fishing and nesting sites as well. Bald eagles winter within the park region and are often seen roosting in large cottonwood trees located in the Downstream Recreation Area. These trees are used by bald eagles during the winter as perches while feeding and resting. Eagles do not use these trees for roosting or nesting purposes.

Project Area: Bald eagles have been observed utilizing sections along the Missouri River for feeding and roosting. Within the project area, bald eagles have been seen overhead. However, it is unlikely that the eagles would be impacted by the construction of the Ponca (REC) as most of the activities of the eagles occur along the river.

Interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) – (E)

DESCRIPTION: The Interior least tern measures 8-9 inches long and has a wingspan of 20 inches making it the smallest member of the gull and tern family (Nebraska Games and Parks, 1997). Both males and females are marked with a black crown which become more pronounced during breeding season. Other characteristics include a white underbelly, orange legs, and gray-black wings.

HABITAT: The Interior least tern nests on sandbars, beaches, gravel pits, or lake and reservoir shorelines. The nesting success depends on both ideal water levels and sizable areas devoid of vegetation (USGS, 2/25/2000).

DISTRIBUTION: Colonies have been reported along the Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, Red, and Rio Grande river systems during breeding season. It is thought that the wintering ground are perhaps along the coasts of Central and South America (USGS, 2/25/2000).

SOURCE OF POPULATION DECLINE: Loss of habitat is the primary cause of population decline. Channalization and dam installation along the main river systems have effectively eliminated the sandbar and barren beach nesting habitat (FWS, 2/24/2000).

Project Area: Interior least terns have been observed feeding along the Missouri river during migration. Potential nesting habitat does exist in areas surrounding the project. However, because the actually project location, impacts are not expected.

Piping plover, (*Charadrius melodus*) – (T)

DESCRIPTION: The Piping plover is a small shore bird measuring 7 inches in length. Closely related to the larger Killdeer, the Piping plover is a light tawny color with a single dark breast band, a white wing stripe, and a white

rump. During breeding season the dark stripe across the crown becomes more pronounced and the bill turns bright orange (FWS, 2/24/00).

HABITAT: From March to August the Piping plover resides on areas devoid of vegetation, preferably sandbars and sand or gravel beaches along rivers, lakes, and gravel pits (USGS, 2/25/00).

RANGE: The Piping plover is a migratory bird spending its life between the United States and Canada. Currently, three populations exist in North America: along the Great Lakes, river and lake shores in the North Great Plains, and along the Atlantic coast (USGS, 2/25/00). The winter grounds are thought to be along the Gulf of Mexico or some southern location.

SOURCE OF POPULATION DECLINE: Habitat loss. Channalization and dam installation along the main river systems has effectively eliminated the sandbar and barren beach-nesting habitat. Regulation of river flows have replaced the annual high flows of the spring and lower flows of the summer (FWS, 2/24/00). Commercial and residential construction has also contributed significantly to the decline in population. Furthermore, the Piping plover is vulnerable to human disturbance. Increased recreational use of rivers, reservoirs, and lakes have effectively distressed nesting birds, forcing them to abandon their eggs or young (FWS, 2/24/00).

Project Area: Piping plovers have been observed feeding on the sand beaches along the Missouri River. Potential nesting habitat does exist in areas surrounding the project. However, because the actually project location, impacts are not expected.

American Burying Beetle: (*Nircophorus americanus*) – (E)

DESCRIPTION: The American Burying beetle is the largest carrion-consuming insect in North America and it is easily distinguished from other species of burying beetles by its orange pronotum, (the shield-like area behind the head)(Carter-Stein, Janet L. Clermont College, 2/11/00). Unlike most insects, the American Burying beetle exhibit parental behavior, caring for the young produced.

HABITAT: The American burying beetle is found in grasslands, native prairies, virgin forests, and scrub thickets. Historically, it was found in a large geographical area throughout the United States and Canada, suggesting that it is not limited by soil type, however, areas with plenty of humus and topsoil for burying of carrion are preferable (USGS, 2/25/00).

RANGE: The American burying beetle was found in 35 state in eastern and central United States and along the south edge of Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia (FWS, 2/24/00). Current studies suggest that the population has been in decline in a north-south direction. Currently, there are two known wild populations existing in the United States, one in eastern Oklahoma and the other in Rhode Island. In South Dakota, populations are known to exist in Gregory and Tripp Counties (Backlund, Doug, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, 2/24/00).

SOURCE OF POPULATION DECLINE: The precise cause of the decline in the population of the American bury beetle has yet to be determined. However, current research indicates that human disturbance, pesticide use, and habitat loss are among the most likely sources (FWS, 2/24/00).

Project Area: There has not been any documentation citing the presence of the American burying beetle within the project area. No surveys have been implemented for the project area, therefore, their status is currently unknown.

Reference:

Contacts:

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